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The more Swift is studied in a kindly spirit, the greater and the better his character will appear. He had faults: he lacked humility, faith that can remove mountains, charity that suffereth long and is kind, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil. He was fervent in spirit, but he was not rejoicing in hope, nor always patient in tribulation. He kept the promise of his youth that he would

“On a day make sin and folly bleed,”

but he did not invite to the table spread for the repentant. His love for the sinner was not equal to his hatred of the sin. In his old age he asked Dr. Delany whether “the corruptions and villanies of men did not eat his flesh and exhaust his spirits?” “No.” “Why, why, how can you help it? How can you avoid it?” “Because I am commanded, ‘Fret not thyself because of evil-doers.’” That command Swift could not obey. Life was no luxury to him. He read the third chapter of Job on his birthdays; and he inscribed on his tombstone his joy that he was at last going where the wicked cease from troubling and where the weary are at rest, *ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit.*

ADAMS SHERMAN HILL.

ART. V. — *Report to the Commissioners appointed by her Majesty to inquire into the Education given in Schools in England, not comprised within her Majesty's two recent Commissions, and to the Commissioners appointed by her Majesty to inquire into the Schools in Scotland, on the Common-School System of the United States and of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada.* By the REV. JAMES FRASER, M. A., Assistant Commissioner. Presented to both Houses of Parliament, by Command of her Majesty. London. 1867.

IN the first year of his administration, when considering the interests of the newly constituted Republic, Washington thus addressed the two Houses of Congress on the subject of National Education: “You will agree with me in opinion

that there is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness. In one in which the measures of government receive their impression so immediately from the sense of the community as in ours, it is proportionably essential." The part of education in forming and then in freeing the Colonies, the power it had given of organizing a national government, the confidence it inspired in the institutions just set in operation, brought it into the very foreground of thought and action.

Events not then anticipated, movements not then within the possibility of anticipation, began in time to develop themselves; and as they grew the work which education had to do grew likewise. When immigration, attracted by the prospects of the young nation, set in with a force almost appalling, and while it brought new hands to labor, brought also new brains to inform and new lives to transform, no single institution appeared so capable of bearing the shock as the common school. To this, indeed, it was due that there was no shock, nothing that overthrew, or even suspended, the national progress. To this, at the present hour, we owe the calmness with which we contemplate the daily landing of emigrants, who in their best estate must be put on probation, and in their worst be sent to the almshouse or the penitentiary. A yet greater strain has come in our day with the emancipation of the slave, throwing upon us at once four millions of blacks, to say nothing of some millions of whites whom slavery had debased, — millions whom it is a matter of vital importance to train to their proper place within our institutions. To do it we resort instinctively to schools. On them the Freedmen's Bureau spends its best energies; on them the associations and individuals, whose care of the Southern population has given war a new aspect and peace a new object, rely in their wholly unprecedented enterprise; on them the whole nation leans, as upon the best of merely human means, to carry out the purposes which it reverently recognizes as Divine.

The work of the common school is twofold. It takes charge of children, trains them in habits of order, teaches them the use of speech and the pen, together with the elements of

language and numbers, disciplining the intellect and giving it the power of acquiring knowledge; and here its direct work ceases. Its indirect work is to help the mind to grow out of school as well as in it, enlightening the life, opening its relations with other lives, and revealing the laws above them all. Whatever influences besides its own affect its pupils, whatever they learn from the home, from society, and from the Church, the school is the source from which they draw much, often the greater part, of what they know, and, consequently, of what they are.

The common school, like everything human, is imperfect. Even where it has done, and is still doing, so great a work as is ascribed to it among ourselves, we can see that its work might be still greater. "I would point," says an Ohio representative, "to the schools of Cincinnati, Cleveland, Toledo, and other cities of the State, if I desired a stranger to see the glory of Ohio. I would point to the thirteen thousand school-houses and the seven hundred thousand pupils in the schools of Ohio." "The returns," says the Ohio School Commissioner, "reveal the humiliating fact that there were six hundred and eighteen townships and special districts in the State in each of which the schools were in session, on an average, less than twenty-four weeks — one hundred and twenty days — during the year. But this is not all; three hundred and forty townships sustained their schools less than twenty weeks; two hundred and three less than sixteen weeks; and forty-five less than twelve weeks." The colors of the two pictures need blending to show our schools as they are and as they should be.

The volume whose title stands at the head of this article is one of the most valuable contributions ever made towards the formation of a correct opinion concerning the common schools of the United States. A foreigner's impressions are always worth having, not because they are certain to be right, but because they are almost certain to be different from our own, and therefore to give us a point of comparison to which ours may be referred.

" ' Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face ? ' "

' No, Cassius, for the eye sees not itself "

But by reflection, by some other things.' "

The value of such means to see ourselves and our institutions is greatly enhanced when the foreign critic is, as in the present instance, a man of principle, good-will, and intelligence.

The Rev. James Fraser, Rector of Upton, Reading, is an active clergyman of the English Church. He came to the United States, under an appointment described on his title-page, in the spring, and went back in the autumn of 1865, spending most of his time in this country, and the rest in Canada. His Report was written within a few months after his return, but not made public for more than a year. It is a blue book of four hundred and thirty pages, of which all but a hundred and twenty relate to the United States, and it is to this portion of the Report that we propose to confine ourselves.

The Report is, throughout, distinguished by its manly and liberal religious tone. It makes no professions, but from first to last its standard is the faith and duty of a Christian. The earnestness of the writer is evident, his sincerity unquestionable.

The kindness of his spirit is not less manifest. Strong as are his convictions, they are modestly expressed, and with the plain purpose of doing good to all whom they concern. Candor and charitableness dwell in these pages, and draw us towards their author with a personal interest that blue books are not wont to inspire. From judgments so temperate and so considerate as his we ought to derive some benefit, nor can we fail to do so, if we take them up in the same spirit in which they are brought forward.

Mr. Fraser says many pleasant things about us and our schools. "It is no flattery or exaggeration," he remarks, "to say that it [the American people] is, if not the most highly educated, yet certainly the most generally educated and intelligent people on the earth." * "I cannot disguise from myself," he confesses, "that the average American, and particularly the average American of the mechanic or laboring class, stands on a vantage-ground, in respect both of knowledge and intelligence, as compared with the average Englishman." † He is much impressed with the national interest in education, especially at such

* Page 203.

† Page 172.

a time as that of the recent war. "Never before," he observes, "were realized so strongly the national blessings of education, and the necessity of democratic institutions resting for a foundation upon the intelligence and public spirit of the people. Never before, therefore, were more liberal appropriations voted by the townships for the support of schools; never before were private benefactions more frequent or munificent; never before was there displayed a more universal determination to uphold in all its integrity, and if possible to carry onward to a still higher degree of efficiency, the education of the people." * The repute of the teacher's profession appears remarkable. "The teacher of the humblest district school," says Mr. Fraser, "occupies a far higher social position than the teacher of an elementary school in England. Opinion and sentiment upon a matter of this kind are formed in the two countries by two entirely different influences. . . . As far as his [the teacher's] profession is concerned, he is on a level with anybody." † Warm terms are used in describing the natural aptitude of Americans, particularly of American women, for teaching. "They certainly have the gift of turning what they know to the best account; they are self-possessed, energetic, fearless; they are admirable disciplinarians, firm without severity, patient without weakness; their manner of teaching is lively, and fertile in illustration; classes are not likely to fall asleep in their hands. They are proud of their position, and fired with a laudable ambition to maintain the credit of their school; a little too anxious, perhaps, to parade its best side and screen its defects; a little too sensitive of blame, a little too greedy of praise; but still, as I judged them from the samples which I saw, and in spite of numerous instances to the contrary which I read of, but did not see, a very fine and capable body of workers in a noble cause. . . . I know not the country in which the natural material out of which to shape the very best of teachers is produced in such abundance as in the United States." ‡

These are general tributes. Of the more particular testimonies in favor of our schools we have space to cite but one,

* Page 11.

† Pages 84, 85.

‡ Pages 71-75.

and that one the strongest. Mr. Fraser speaks of the English High School at Boston as "a school which I should have liked, if possible, to put under a glass case, and bring to England for exhibition as a type of a thoroughly useful middle-class school." * Further on he repeats his commendation. "I have already mentioned the English High School at Boston as the one above all others that I visited in America which I should like the Commissioners to have seen at work as I myself saw it at work on the 10th of last June,—the very type of a school for the middle classes of this country, managed in the most admirable spirit, and attended by just the sort of boys one would desire to see in such a school. . . . It was not the programme of study (in which my own judgment would dispose me to make several alterations) that elicited my admiration of this school,—indeed, I have learnt to attach very little weight either to programmes or systems, — but the excellent spirit that seemed to pervade it, the healthy, honest, thorough way in which all the work on the part both of masters and pupils seemed to be done. . . . In a word, everything is done to sustain the intellectual tone of the school at a high pitch, yet without straining; while there was an honesty, a frankness, and an absence of restraint in the 'rapports' between the teacher and the taught which indicated that the moral atmosphere of the school was as healthy and bracing as the intellectual. Taking it for all in all, and as accomplishing the end at which it professes to aim, the English High School at Boston struck me as the model school of the United States. I wish we had a hundred such in England." †

These citations are quite enough to prove the readiness with which Mr. Fraser acknowledges the merits of our common-school system. Its defects are stated with corresponding frankness.

First in order of importance, the very head and front of our failing, comes the want of high culture. Mr. Fraser falls back on De Tocqueville to sustain his judgment, but it needs no other support in American eyes than that which Americans themselves are prepared to give. We know, too well, that the great necessity of our common school is the same as that of all our

* Page 129.

† Pages 140 – 142.

educational, all our intellectual interests, and that nothing will supply it but the increase of thorough scholarship and thorough scholars. Whether new organizations are needed is a point on which we may not agree, but we are of one mind that the old organizations need a new inspiration.

“Till the world is brought

To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.”

High culture is to the intellectual life what a pure atmosphere is to the physical; and just as it fails or abounds, the school will struggle or flourish.

Mr. Fraser remarks upon the frequent want of local interest—it may be said, of local capability,—with regard to our schools. Dependent as they are on State or district organizations, “local self-government” being, as Mr. Fraser observes, “the main-spring of the American school system,” if this works badly, they cannot possibly work well. The district system is much objected to in this Report, as it is in many of our own publications, but there does not seem to be anything in it intrinsically wrong. A dull or stingy centralization would be worse, for its evil effects would spread everywhere, while those of the district system are within bounds. But there can be no question that the schools often suffer, and suffer terribly, from the failure of the community, through a short-sighted regard for a nominal economy, or through indifference to the cause of education, to afford them a liberal and intelligent support.

A large part of the Report is occupied with our teachers. Their natural capacities, as we have seen, are rated very high; but their training seems to Mr. Fraser exceedingly imperfect. He contrasts the English course of nine years—“five years as pupil-teachers, two years at the Normal School, and two years under probation”—with the American way of teaching without having learned to teach, sometimes, it must be confessed, though he does not say so, without having learned to learn. “More than five hundred persons,” says the Connecticut Superintendent of Schools, “each year begin their experience in teaching in the common schools of the State.” Normal Schools are few and far between, wholly insufficient to supply the demand, even such as it is, for trained teachers. “During the last two years” (1865, 1866), says the Principal of the

Bridgewater Normal School in Massachusetts, "the number of applications for teachers which I have received is by actual count nearly five times the number of graduates for this time." * Even if the quantity were sufficient, we fear that the quality might not be the best, at least so far as training is concerned; for the Normal courses are but brief at the best, and many pupils leave them uncompleted. Of practical instruction there is altogether too little, although we can hardly credit the statement that but one Normal School — that at Boston — includes an experimental department.

The social position of American teachers makes it difficult for Mr. Fraser to understand why they are poorly paid. The explanation he hits upon is, that the simplest means to keep down the cost of education is to keep down the teachers' salaries. Other reasons will readily suggest themselves. But however we account for the evil, its existence is a fact, and its removal a necessity. We must pay our teachers well, or we shall have none worth paying; none will be trained as they ought to be, none, whether trained or untrained, will continue in a calling with which poverty walks hand in hand. One of the troubles with which our schools have to contend is the readiness of teachers to change their places, or to give up teaching altogether. An Ohio report observes that "the rapid withdrawal of the more enterprising from the profession is crippling the schools." It is not only crippling them, but blinding them, making them deaf and mute and senseless; for if a school has eye or speech or sense, it is through its teachers: they are its organs, and their loss is greater than it can bear. The wind of parsimony that has blown so long is not altogether ill, for it has thrown open many a school door to female teachers whom committees have condescended to take at a low rate, but whose work has turned out as valuable as if it had been highly paid. A School Commissioner of Rhode Island regards women as equal to men in teaching, and superior to them in forming the tastes and manners of their pupils. But so long as the teacher is paid, not according to the value of his or her services, but at the lowest rate at which any one can be found

* Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education (Mass.), p. 95.

to do the required work, the administration of our schools is as unjust as it is unwise. Man or woman, the teacher earns a liberal compensation, and when it is given, the school, instead of costing more, really costs less than when it is not given; for in the one case, generally speaking, there is a good school, in the other a bad one.

Mr. Fraser thinks the want of inspection a very serious one in our system. Only the larger cities and more active towns provide superintendents for their schools; and though there is but one opinion as to the service rendered by these officers, their number does not multiply, nor would their increase, all over the country, unless they were associated and placed under some general supervision, constitute a system of inspection like that of the European states. Mr. Matthew Arnold, in his *Report on Popular Education in France*, thus describes the French inspection: * “The primary inspectors are the very life of the school system; their inspection is a reality, because made when not expected; the Nancy inspector, who went round the schools of that town with me, had a pass-key by which he let himself into any one of them when he pleased, and he told me that he entered every public school in the town fifty times in the year. The academy inspectors, receiving the reports of the primary inspectors, and themselves in connection with the sixteen academies of France, supply local centres for dealing with the mass of details received from the primary inspectors, and thus relieve the central office in Paris. The four inspectors-general, in personal communication with the school authorities, the primary inspectors, and the minister preserve the latter from the danger of falling a victim to the routine of his own bureau, while he also obtains from four picked and superior men a unity of appreciation of school matters which he would seek for in vain from the two hundred and seventy-five primary inspectors.” If there is too much centralization in this system, there is not a grain too much of inspection to be adapted, under necessary modifications, to our own school system. We have, at last, something to suggest a Ministry of Public Education in the Bureau re-

* Page 95.

cently established by Congress, and much may be hoped from the long experience and unwavering enthusiasm of Mr. Commissioner Barnard. He will collect and diffuse information, as the act of Congress prescribes, to the great advantage, doubtless, of educational institutions and activities. But he is not an inspector-general, nor has he inspectors under him to reach a single school, or to provide the inspection from which, whether national or local, every school in the land would be the gainer. Besides all the advantages of detail to be derived from inspection, there is the general advantage, hardly to be over-estimated in our country, resulting from the substitution of the practised judgment of an inspector in place of the haphazard votes of a committee, or the unreflecting applauses of a popular assemblage.

Inspection would soon lessen, if it did not entirely remove, another evil on which Mr. Fraser remarks,—the use, or rather abuse, of text-books. He takes particular exception to the grammars and text-books of the classical courses, as “fatal to anything like thorough grounding and intelligent progress,”—the grammars, because of their inordinate details; and the text-books, because of their notes and ready-made translations. There are very few text-books in any course which do not offend against simplicity, of all qualities the one to which they should universally adhere. Like the sheep’s head, which the Scotchman was eating to the Englishman’s astonishment, the text-book of the American schools has “a deal o’ confused feedin’ about it.” But, unlike the Scotch dish, it excites no enthusiasm in its uncertain consumers. A good book may be a hindrance, if it is too much relied upon; how much more a bad book, whose mistakes are beyond the teacher’s reach, and therefore crowded pell-mell into the pupil’s brain. Mr. Fraser quotes a burst of fine writing from a Cincinnati report: “The Genius of Education sits like Niobe in our schools, weeping over the maltreatment of the fresh and beautiful minds which she would endow with so many charms; and Memory, the deity to whom all this incense is offered, falls at last, and rejects the profuse sacrifice.” Niobe might shed a tear for many a parent, likewise, whose slender purse is drawn upon by frequent changes of text-books, the result

of competition, and, it must be confessed, of jobbery among the publishers.

"Americans do all their work," says Mr. Fraser, "with an intensity which has no parallel among us more phlegmatic Englishmen; to use a common and expressive phrase, they 'take twice as much out of themselves,' in the same time, as an ordinary English school-boy or school-girl would do. The result is exciting serious apprehensions in many far-seeing minds." * To put a school of unforeseeing and unre-sisting children under high-pressure, and drive them on to danger, perhaps to death, is an offence not only against their youth, but against the powers that are to last when youth is no more. Of course it is perpetrated only in the minority of schools throughout the country; but were no more than a single school injured by it, it should be stopped, once and for all.

One happy result from stopping it would be a check to what Mr. Fraser calls "speechification." A public-school platform, as we all have reason to know, is too much like a stand at a race-course, where every voice is raised to goad on those contending for the prize. The speakers at the school, to be sure, are themselves goaded to their office. "A few remarks," whispers the teacher; "A few remarks," ask the committee; and a few follow, then a few more, and a gust of words sweeps through the room. "The staple of most that I heard," says Mr. Fraser, "was the well-worn theme of the infinite career that lay before them, and the possibility of every boy who listened to the speaker becoming President of the United States." † That a drag should be put on this ever-rolling wheel of oratory is almost too much to hope for, did not hope spring eternal.

Thus far we have followed Mr. Fraser, confessing the faults he finds, and wishing that criticism so thoughtful and so kind as his may help us to correct them. From other opinions, equally unfavorable, which he forms concerning our schools, we venture to differ, for reasons that may be very briefly presented.

He considers the discipline of the schools too mechanical. Mechanical it must be, though it ought to be something more ; but even if nothing more, we need not acknowledge that " it is purchased at the price of the repression of those high animal spirits which delight in athletic exercises." * Evidently Mr. Fraser did not get acquainted with many American boys. It is rather droll, by the by, to hear an Englishman say that our school discipline " is of a kind of which it would be hopeless to attempt to get five hundred English boys of the upper or middle class to submit." American nature is not so rebellious after all.

" The grand defect of all which I should venture to signalize in the American system," remarks Mr. Fraser, " is, that it ignores, if it does not smother, individuality." By individuality he says he means " the development of individual abilities and character." With all due deference, not only to Mr. Fraser, but to others who say the same thing about schools, here and elsewhere, we doubt its significance. It means, in all probability, not that the individual is left untaught, but that he is taught with others, instead of being taught by himself ; consequently, that his tastes or capacities cannot be regarded to the exclusion of his fellow-pupils. The common school teaches by classes : how can it teach otherwise ? but to teach a class, it must teach the members of the class, and every one of them. Each, therefore, as he proceeds in his studies, finds himself growing in knowledge, and in the power to acquire knowledge ; and this is at least one of the most effective means for the development of latent individuality. The pupil that needs more must go to a private school, perhaps to a private tutor ; and even then, unless his teacher is gifted with unusual insight into his nature, or unusual responsiveness to its wants, his individuality will suffer. But it is not the office of any teacher or of any school, exclusively, to develop individual ability or individual character. That is the work of home as well as school, and of parent yet more than teacher,—the work, it may be said, of life itself, and of the influences under which life passes.

From the school comes intellectual training; from the home, and from the life beginning there, comes the training of body and soul, in which individual character finds opportunity of development a hundred-fold greater than that which the training of the mind alone supplies.

But, Mr. Fraser would say, it is not the mind alone that should be trained at school. "The one thing lacking in the American method," he observes, is "sound and substantial grounding in the principles of the Christian religion." * On a point so momentous he must be fully heard:—

"The tone of an American school,—the *nescio quid* so hard to be described, but so easily recognized by the experienced eye, so soon felt by the quick perceptions of the heart,—if not unsatisfactory, is yet incomplete. It is true that the work of the day commences with the reading of the Word of God, generally followed by prayer. It is true that decorous if not reverent attention is paid during both these exercises; but the decorum struck me as rather a result or a part of discipline than as a result of spiritual impressions; there was no 'face as it had been the face of an angel'; no appearance of kindled hearts. The intellectual tone of the schools is high; the moral tone, though perhaps a little too self-conscious, is not unhealthy; but another tone, which can only be vaguely described in words, but of which one feels one's self in the presence when it is really there, and which, for want of a better name, I must call the 'religious' tone, one misses, and misses with regret." † "I do not like to call the American system of education, or to hear it called, *irreligious*. It is perhaps even going too far to say that it is *non-religious*, or purely secular. If the cultivation of some of the choicest intellectual gifts bestowed by God on man, the perceptions, memory, taste, judgment, reason; if the exaction of habits of punctuality, attention, industry, and 'good behavior'; if the respect which is required and which is paid during the reading of a daily portion of God's holy Word and the daily saying of Christ's universal prayer,—are all to be set down as only so many contrivances for producing 'clever devils,' it would be vain to argue against such a prejudice." ‡ "Sorry as I should be, with all its imperfections, to give up the denominational principle of education, because I believe it to be the best possible for *us here*, I should consider myself to be tendering a most fatal piece of advice if, with all its advantages, I recommended its adoption *there*. The safer hope is that American Chris-

* Page 172, note.

† Page 179.

‡ Page 183.

tians, less trammelled by articles, confessions, subscriptions, rubrics, formularies, than we Christians of the Old World, may be brought to take larger, broader views than they now do of their common faith; may dismiss from their minds that ever-recurring and unworthy suspicion of sectarianism; may believe that religion may be taught in schools without the aim of making proselytes; and that 'all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity' may unite in one earnest endeavor to bestow upon their schools the one thing lacking, and permit the morality which they profess to teach and desire to promote to be built upon the one only sure foundation, — the truths, the principles, the sanctions of the Gospel."*

There is no arguing against the spirit, or much of the letter, of these passages. In our judgment, they do the writer the highest credit as a religious, a charitable, and an earnest man. But as to the one thing lacking in our schools, if it is the teaching of religion, we have to take the other side. Let there be no misunderstanding; it is not the observation or the reverence of religion, but the teaching of it, — not the indirect teaching of it, by example or by religious use of all the opportunities of school, but the direct teaching that consists in doctrinal or practical religious instruction, the grounding, as Mr. Fraser terms it, in the principles of religion, — which we have no wish to introduce into our system, so long as the divisions of the Christian Church, or the habits of thought and action characteristic of the American people, continue as they are.

And why not? Because the common school is not the place for teaching religion. Because the teachers of the common school are not the persons to teach religion. Because the office of the common school, in moulding the various elements of the nation, and thus preserving and developing our nationality, — an office which no other institution or power among us seems able at present to perform, — is one with which the teaching of religion would so far interfere, especially with one large class not needing to be named, as to diminish, if not altogether prevent, its success. Because, for these three reasons, to allege no more, religion itself would suffer, while other interests, less important indeed, but still important, would suffer even more.

The common school will continue, we trust, to teach religiously, but it will not undertake, we also trust, to teach religion.

Space fails us for meeting other criticisms of Mr. Fraser's. There are parts of his Report which might be criticised in turn, either as to structure or as to statement. There is some confusion and a good deal of repetition in the arrangement, as if the author were writing hurriedly. There are also a few misapprehensions, such as that "in all cities the wealthier class, indeed, all who can afford to do so, almost without exception, send their children to private schools"; * or that "this temper [restlessness] more than any other . . . is the motive power which sustains the schools"; † or that "the Roman matron of the old Republic is, perhaps, the type of female excellence." ‡ Mr. Fraser was too short a time among us to become thoroughly acquainted with our institutions or our ideals. The wonder is that he learned so much, and that he has done justice, so generally, to the common school, of all our characteristic institutions the one perhaps most difficult for a stranger to understand.

The Report touches but slightly on one subject, which it may be well to consider more at length. Mr. Fraser points out "the admitted increase of the twin evils, absenteeism and truancy"; says that both the percentage and period of attendance are hardly so good as in England; quotes several gloomy passages from American reports; and, citing the Massachusetts and Connecticut laws which make education compulsory, declares that public sentiment is not with them, and that they are therefore almost dead letters. § Here is evidently a great evil, but we are not quite so helpless under it as might be inferred from Mr. Fraser's statements.

The evil arises almost entirely from emigration. A very small proportion of absentees or truants are of American parentage. The class is recruited from abroad, and in this respect, as so many others, the habits of the Old World continue in the New. Mere poverty is seldom the cause of absenteeism or truancy. Here and there a child needs clothing, or his parents, generally his widowed mother, require all he can do or beg for a struggling household. In manufac-

* Page 99.

† Page 168.

‡ Page 195.

§ Page 39.

turing towns, parents are tempted to think themselves in want of their children's wages, by the great facility with which they find employment. But, taking town and country together, it is not poverty so much as intemperance or immorality which keeps children from school, — victims of their parents' faults rather than their parents' misfortunes.

The common-school system, therefore, must be put to the test, whether it is capable of coping, not only with the child, but with his parents. It cannot afford to let absenteeism or truancy go on; the very class most in need of its offices would not receive them, and its work for the nation would be left undone. What, then, can it do?

In the first place, it can make its schools attractive. It can give them so kindly an aspect as to draw children, even children of degradation, and to keep them within its walls. If it cannot change human nature, so that the whining school-boy will no more creep unwillingly to school, it can change itself, so that the school-boy, when once in school, will prefer to stay there instead of running away. In the next place, it can reach out beyond the school, to the home. There lies the root of the evil; there are the ignorance and the wickedness which develop it; there, after all, it is to be eradicated. In this teachers and committees must be aided, either by officials of some sort, or by volunteers from the same class which labors in mission chapels or Sunday schools. The work is missionary rather than educational, but not the less suited to be done in connection with the school.

In calling upon parents to send their children, and upon the children to come, there should be a spice of consideration. Concessions may be made to individuals or classes, and at certain seasons the pressure may be generally relaxed, as it is in many European states where education is compulsory.* Let not ours be as compulsory as if it were the work of

“ Too busy senates, who with over-care
To make us better than our kind can bear, . . .
And straining up too high, have spoiled the cause.”

* In the canton of Friburg, Switzerland, the inspector may excuse such children as are absolutely needed at home. In the canton of Vaud, children above twelve, whose services are required by their parents, may be excused. — *Mr. M. Arnold's Report*, p. 125. In some manufacturing towns in Germany children are obliged to attend only noon or evening schools. — *The Rev. M. Pattison's Report*, p. 195.

Only in the last place, when efforts and concessions alike have failed, is the law to be invoked. As yet there is no general law upon the subject. In some States of the Union no law has been proposed; in others it has been advocated; in one or two it has been adopted; in one alone it has been both framed and executed. Massachusetts was a Colony in her teens, when, in 1642, she ordered "that the selectmen of every town in the several precincts and quarters where they dwell shall have a vigilant eye over their brothers and neighbors, to see, first, that none of them shall suffer so much barbarism in any of their families as not to endeavor to teach, by themselves or others, their children and apprentices so much learning as may enable them perfectly to read the English tongue, and knowledge of the capital laws, upon penalty of twenty shillings for each neglect therein." This, if we mistake not, was the first statute of compulsory education.* Almost two centuries had passed, emigration had begun its work, and New England manufactories theirs, when Massachusetts, in 1836, again raised her voice in the Factory Act, which, as amended in 1866, provides that no child under ten years of age shall be employed in any manufacturing establishment, and that no child under fourteen shall be employed unless he has attended school for six months in the year preceding his employment, and continues at school for six months in each year during his employment, under penalties for which the owner, agent, or superintendent of the establishment, as well as the parent or guardian of the child, is liable. A law to reach truants and absentees, passed in 1850 and amended at various dates until 1862,† obliges every city and town to make provision concerning truant and vagrant children between the ages of five

* "The compulsory school attendance [of Germany] dates from the earliest period of the Reformation, and was a recognized religious duty long before it became a law of the state. . . . If the consistorial edicts which were issued to this effect (e. g. that for the Mark of Brandenburg, 1573) were issued in the name of the prince, they were not the less Church ordinances. When, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, Friedrich Wilhelm began to issue royal ordinances for the regulation and improvement of elementary schools," etc. — *The Rev. M. Pattison's Report*, pp. 204, 205.

† The story of its struggles into efficient shape is well told by Mr. J. D. Philbrick, Superintendent of Schools, in his valuable Reports on Truancy and Compulsory Education in the City of Boston.

and sixteen, and to bring them under certain penalties, a fine not exceeding twenty dollars, or committal to a house of reformation or other suitable institution for a period not exceeding two years. Massachusetts has thus fully committed herself to compulsory education. Whatever the cause,—the death or degradation of the parent, the helplessness or wilfulness of the child,—there can be neither truancy nor absenteeism, unless the city or town connive at them, except at the risk of fine or imprisonment.

To this system Boston has lately added a finishing touch. Among her boys, long her hope and pride, there grew up a class whose present condition no one could behold without pity, and to whose future none could look forward without alarm. News-boys, boot-blacks, and pedlers, to the number of five hundred or more, were spending their days in the streets, and many of them their nights at the theatres or far more dangerous places. The first exertion for their instruction was individual; then followed associated effort, of which we should be glad to relate the history, did we not feel that those engaged in it prefer to pursue their labors undisturbed; until, within the last few months, a city ordinance was framed, according to which no minor is to be licensed as a pedler or boot-black except upon his parent's or guardian's application, and none is to retain his license unless he attends "some school designated for this purpose by the school committee" for two hours daily. It is to be hoped that this wise and salutary ordinance will be fully executed in Boston, and as fully adopted wherever there exists even a handful of news-boys to be snatched from actual ignorance or possible crime.

The execution of the Massachusetts statutes is left to municipal authority. As a general rule, a town * appoints one or more of the police to act as truant officers, and they proceed much as one of their number in Boston describes. "In cases," says Officer Reed, "where I fail to check the habit of truancy, and the child becomes an habitual truant, I make a complaint

* According to the last Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, ninety-eight cities and towns of the State have appointed truant officers.

before one of the justices of the Police Court; a warrant is granted, made returnable at the justice's private room in the Court-House; I arrest the child, and summon the teacher to appear at the time and place named in the warrant. I likewise notify the parents, that they may be present and heard. If the child is found guilty by the court, a sentence of one or two years in the House of Reformation is passed; and in other instances the cases are continued from time to time, in order that the truants may have an opportunity to reform."* .

In commenting upon the Massachusetts system, the first point to raise is, whether the child ought to be held responsible for truancy or absenteeism. If it is the parent who keeps the child from school, or makes no sort of exertion to send him to school, then the parent, as it seems, rather than the child, deserves to be punished. So he is, indeed, if the child is fined and the parent pays the fine; but if the child goes to the reformatory or the jail, and the parent goes free, it does not look like even-handed justice. In four of the Swiss cantons where compulsory education is established, — Vaud, Friburg, Neuchâtel, and the Valais, — and it is the same in Germany, the parent is liable to fine or imprisonment. He is liable under the Factory Act of Massachusetts; why should he not be under the Truant Act?

Suppose, however, that the fault is with the child, the Massachusetts mode of treating him is not above objection. There is nothing gained by dealing with young lives, even when turned towards evil, as if positively hardened. The German mode of proceeding is much better. At Berlin they have a commission of unpaid members, to visit the parent in private, before an official admonition is given. An unexcused absence occurring within a month after the admonition brings out a warning that the parent is liable to punishment. If another unexcused absence occurs within a month, the case is transferred to the school board, under which the commission acts, and the board give it into the hands of a committee, who, upon inquiry, assess a fine, and order the payment within eight days, during which time an appeal may be had to the civil authority. Our system,

* Mr. Philbrick's First Report, p. 45.

if less complicated, is much less considerate. "I believe," says Officer Cole of Boston, "in using all other means to reform truants before bringing them before the court; my experience has been, that a judicious use of the lock-up is one of the most effectual methods of checking truancy." *

Even if he must come to sentence and an imprisonment, the child should not be sent invariably to a House of Reformation. "What we want," says the School Committee of Concord, "is a home, a farm-school, which shall inflict no stigma on the character, and where there are no older sinners to teach every vile habit, and where unruly youth can be sent to receive a wise and saving discipline." † This is an admirable suggestion, and one that might be pushed further, so as to propose the treatment of truants in families rather than in any schools or institutions. In our day, at the university, the student corresponding to the school truant was liable to be rusticated; but, instead of going into purgatory with others, he went alone, under the guidance of some angelic Alumnus, who would read Juvenal with him, and refit him for the academic sphere. If the truant cannot expect so soft a fall as this, it need not be so hard as to cripple him for life. At all events, he should not be thrown in among others worse than himself, or even as bad as himself, unless his punishment is the first object and his reformation the second. No straggler gets back to his regiment by being incorporated with a mass of other men as much out of line as he is. Moreover, the child, once placed under restraint, should be allowed, we think, to shorten his term by good behavior. A scale of marks, like those of the Irish prisons, would be a ready means of proving his disposition; and if it were favorable, he should be encouraged by the hope of earning a release within the period for which he was sentenced. It ought to be his effort, as well as the effort of those who have him in charge, to obtain his restoration to school; just as it should be the purpose, in punishing any offence, to restore the offender to the place where he belongs, and not to cut him off from it for life.

* Mr. Philbrick's Second Report, p. 39.

† Thirteenth Annual Report of the Board of Education (Mass.), School Committees' Reports, p. 72.

Compulsory education has its opponents everywhere. They dwell upon the rights of the father, insisting that to compel him to send his child to school is to break up his authority as the head of his family, and therefore to break up the family itself, and thus destroy the corner-stone of society. They pronounce the system contrary to free institutions, a violation of the *laissez-faire* principle which is their essence, a substitution of force for reason, which is their safeguard, and, as M. Guizot writes in explanation of his not adopting it during his Ministry of Public Instruction, one of "those rules which bear the mark of the convent or the barrack." * They declare it to have been the creature of centralization, as of Sparta in ancient times or of Louis XIV. in modern times, and that to adopt it, where the individual is not already swallowed up in the state, will insure his being speedily devoured. Many of these points were made at a session of the International Social Science Congress, consisting of delegates from all parts of Europe, and meeting at London in 1862. The majority of the Congress decided against compulsory education.

Against this decision may be set that of another Congress, the International Workingmen's, assembled a few months ago at Lausanne. Representing the class which suffers, if any does, from the infraction of parental and popular rights involved, as is said, in compulsory education, the Congress, after a discussion of considerable heat, committed itself to the system with but one reservation, that the education should be national, not denominational. It is a long step forward towards the general establishment of the system when such a body declares in its favor; for should their constituents follow their lead, the ground of opposition would be gone. The late gathering of the British Social Science Association at Belfast took up the question, and, if we are rightly informed, generally approved the arguments in behalf of compulsory education. Such we may judge to be the current of opinion among the educated still more than among the uneducated classes of Europe. Whether there is any opinion among ourselves strong enough to create a prevailing current in the same direction is doubtful; the popular prepossessions against it are

* *Mém. pour Servir à l'Hist. de Mon Temps*, Tome III. p. 61.

very evident. As for the history of the system, on which its opponents rely a good deal, the facts are on the side of its advocates. It began in Europe with the Reformation; in America, thirty-five years after the English occupation, with the first Colony whose charter gave power to introduce it; on both sides the ocean, therefore, it is associated with the growth of liberty. One of the blows dealt against the ancient *régime* by the French Revolution was the establishment of compulsory education; and though the sweep of the Revolution may have been but a *déluge de mots*, as it has been called, its surges show what was thought liberal by those to whom liberalism was a matter of life and death. Its liberal character is still more fully supported by the recent development of the system in Massachusetts, where centralization and its train are not supposed to be making much headway. The child, it is to be further noted, has his rights, and, as far as they relate to education, the system of compulsion protects them. The father has his duties, and, as far as they relate to education, the system enforces them. To enforce the father's duties is not, we take it, to invade his rights, not to undermine the family, not to undermine society, not, in fine, to bring about any of the evils conjured up by the opponents of compulsory education. On the contrary, it would seem that the system, instead of being an assault upon the individual, or upon the family, or upon society, is, to the extent of its influence, a defence of all the three.*

All education is a development, an opening through the ignorances and errors that lie between us and the life before us. It begins within, but works outwardly, and leads us forth from encompassing obstructions to broader ground and clearer skies. Compulsory education does the same, in breaking a way for children or for classes whose training is obstructed, and setting them fast in the direction of light and truth.

SAMUEL ELIOT.

* Mr. Fraser (p. 41, note) quotes from the report of the Superintendent of Connecticut Schools as follows: "It is a question . . . whether the safety of the State and the best interests of society do not require that some measures shall be adopted which shall insure the attendance of all of school age not justifiably absent. The services of the older children may be of some value to the parent or employer now, but it is not a wise arrangement, or one just to the child or the State, which robs one of his birthright under a free, intelligent government, or the other of the power, security, and wealth which educated minds bring."